

## Challenges Among Overseas Filipino Worker Nurses in Pursuing Graduate Studies: A Descriptive Quantitative Analysis

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### ABSTRACT

*This study aimed to determine the challenges faced by Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses in pursuing graduate studies and examined how these barriers relate to their perceived feasibility. Using a descriptive-correlational design, data from 89 OFW nurses at one of the Military hospitals in Saudi Arabia showed that financial, time and workload, institutional, technological, and psychological challenges were all rated highly, with time and workload as the strongest constraints. Higher levels of challenges were significantly associated with lower perceived feasibility ( $p = .000$ ). Age was related to the challenges encountered, while marital status and salary range were linked to perceived feasibility. Guided by Benner's Novice to Expert Theory, Pender's Health Promotion Model, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the study offered a theory-integrated baseline for understanding how personal responsibilities, workplace demands, and institutional accessibility shape OFW nurses' pursuit of advanced education. Although many studies examined OFW experiences in general, no research specifically explored the interconnected roles of demographic factors, challenges, and perceived feasibility among OFW nurses in Saudi hospitals. This absence of context-specific evidence created a clear gap that the present study addresses by focusing on the unique academic realities of OFW nurses in Saudi Arabia. Understanding these dynamics is essential not only for improving academic outcomes but also for strengthening the global nursing workforce, enhancing professional mobility, and ensuring that Filipino nurses who contribute significantly to international healthcare systems are empowered to advance their careers. Its value for future researchers lies in providing an empirically grounded framework, clearly defined demographic and institutional variables, and a foundation for cross-country comparisons, longitudinal analyses, and deeper qualitative inquiry.*

**Keywords:** Challenges, OFW Nurses, pursuing graduate studies, professional development

### INTRODUCTION

OFW nurses care deeply for patients yet find it difficult to pursue their own academic dreams. This is due to heavy workloads, cultural and academic adjustments, and limited institutional support abroad that hinder their academic progress. This underscored the gap in quantitative evidence examining how support systems such as flexible learning, employer assistance, academic advising, and psychosocial resources shaped the educational outcomes of

migrant nurses. This gap also emphasized the importance of accessible and equitable pathways for advanced nursing education within the global workforce.

### Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to determine the challenges faced by Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses in pursuing graduate studies, focusing on measurable factors that influence their academic readiness, persistence, and ability to complete a graduate program. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the demographic profile of OFW nurses in terms of:
  - 1.1 Age
  - 1.2 Sex
  - 1.3 Marital Status
  - 1.4 Highest Educational Attainment
  - 1.5 Years of Nursing Experience outside the Philippines
  - 1.6 Current Position
  - 1.7 Salary Range
  - 1.8 Unit Assignment
2. What challenges affect the ability of OFW nurses to pursue graduate studies in terms of:
  - 2.1 Financial Barriers
  - 2.2 Time and Workload Barriers
  - 2.3 Institutional and Access Barriers
  - 2.4 Technological & Online Learning Barriers
  - 2.5 Personal and Psychological Barriers
  - 2.6 Support Systems and Readiness
3. Is there a significant relationship between the demographic profile of OFW Nurses and the challenges in pursuing to graduate studies?
4. Is there a significant relationship between demographic profiles of OFW nurses in the perceived feasibility?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the challenges faced by OFW nurses and their ability to pursue graduate studies?
6. Is there a significant relationship between the challenges encountered by OFW nurses and the perceived feasibility of pursuing graduate studies?
7. Based on the findings of the study, what recommendation can be proposed to effectively address the challenges faced by OFW nurses in pursuing graduate studies?

### Scope and Delimitations

The study was limited by its descriptive-correlational design, which identifies relationships but cannot establish causality. Data were self-reported. The sample was restricted to OFW nurses in a selected hospital abroad, thereby limiting generalizability.

### Review of Related Literatures

Graduate Studies education significantly contributed to career growth by providing specialized knowledge and skills training. The impact on career advancement, earning potential, and career opportunities also varies based on the highest degree earned and sector of employment (Cruz, 2024). Motivating nurses to continue their education is essential, given the

benefits it provides to patients, organizations, and professionals (Vuksa, 2025). Continuous professional development forms the basis of lifelong learning in nursing and plays a critical role in maintaining up-to-date knowledge and skills (Seyhan, 2026). For OFW nurses, the motivation to work abroad stems from the opportunity to earn higher wages, strengthen familial ties, and access better career prospects (Sabay, 2025). Literature shows that OFW nurses encounter significant barriers when pursuing graduate studies abroad. Despite strong motivation for professional advancement, these combined factors reduce enrollment, persistence, and completion rates among migrant nurses. Overall, the literature underscores the need for responsive, accessible, and well-structured support systems to enable OFW nurses to pursue advanced education while working overseas.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Integration of Benner's Novice to Expert Theory, Pender's Health Promotion Model, and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in this study provided a comprehensive lens for understanding the experiences of OFW nurses in pursuing graduate studies. Benner shows that nurses naturally seek further education as they grow in competence and aim to reach higher levels of expertise. Pender adds that this decision is shaped by motivation, perceived benefits, and the barriers they face in their daily lives. Maslow reminds us that before nurses can focus on advanced education, their basic needs, such as rest, safety, financial stability, and emotional support, must be met. Together, these theories show that pursuing graduate studies is both a developmental progression and a motivational behavior that depends on the fulfillment of essential needs and the ability to overcome personal and environmental barriers.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Input, Process, and Output (IPO) framework, which showed the flow of the study, was used. It began with the inputs, including the respondents' profiles and the challenges they face. It moved to the process, which covers how I gathered and analyzed the data. Finally, it led to the outputs, which present the identified challenges and the proposed policy framework. This structure guided both the SOP and the analysis.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study used a quantitative descriptive-correlational design to determine the relationships between the demographic profile of OFW nurses, the challenges encountered, and their perceived feasibility of pursuing graduate studies.

### **Research Design**

For participant selection, non-probability convenience sampling, supplemented by purposive sampling, yielded a sample of 89 OFW nurses. The purposive sampling ensured that only those who met specific criteria were included, despite their varying schedules.

### **Research Steps**

A structured online questionnaire was the primary research tool, validated against relevant literature. It aimed to quantitatively assess the challenges faced by OFW nurses. It used a 4-point-Likert scale to encourage clear responses by minimizing neutral options. To ensure the

questionnaire's quality, it underwent validation and reliability checks. Experts reviewed it for clarity and relevance, and their feedback was incorporated to improve the final instrument. A pilot test with a small group helped evaluate the questionnaire's clarity and functionality.

### **Data Collection and Sample Selection**

The study carefully collected data from Overseas Filipino Worker (OFW) nurses, starting with ethics committee approval to ensure respect for participants. Participation was voluntary, with online questionnaires provided on a secure platform to accommodate the nurses' busy schedules. After gathering responses, the researcher reviewed the data for completeness and validity and stored it securely.

### **Data Analysis Methods**

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and mean scores, to summarize and interpret survey responses.

### **Research Hypotheses and Validation**

In this study, four hypotheses were formulated to examine whether key variables such as demographic profile, challenges faced, and perceived feasibility of pursuing graduate studies were significantly related to OFW nurses' ability to pursue graduate studies. These hypotheses were intentionally structured as null hypotheses to align with the statistical procedures used in descriptive-correlational research where the goal is to test whether relationships exist among variables.

### **Study Limitations and Ethical Considerations**

The study adhered to established research ethical standards. All information was used solely for academic purposes with strict respect for participants' rights, dignity, and welfare.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Based on the findings of the study, the perceived challenges encountered by Overseas Filipino nurses pursuing graduate studies had the lowest mean scores across all domains, specifically work-related, financial, academic, and environmental. These consistently low scores signified that respondents uniformly experienced these barriers at notable levels, regardless of their demographic characteristics. The statistical analyses further revealed that no significant relationships existed between the respondents' demographic profiles and the identified challenges, nor between demographic variables and the perceived feasibility of pursuing graduate studies. Despite this absence of significant associations, the lowest mean scores in each domain provided a clear empirical basis for rejecting all null hypotheses. These scores demonstrate that the challenges are pervasive and meaningfully affect respondents' ability and readiness to pursue graduate education.

## **SUMMARY**

The study showed that OFW nurses' ability to pursue graduate studies is shaped by a combination of demographic factors and several major barriers. Most respondents were mid-career nurses with heavy workloads, financial responsibilities, and limited time flexibility.

They faced significant financial strain, demanding work schedules, institutional limitations, technological challenges, and psychological pressures. Among all demographic factors, marital status and salary range have the strongest influence on perceived feasibility, while age affects the intensity of challenges encountered. Overall, the findings highlighted that feasibility is determined more by workload, access, technology, emotional readiness, and support systems than by financial issues alone.

## CONCLUSIONS

The convergence of two key results, which include the lowest domain scores and the non-significant demographic relationships, supports the rejection of all null hypotheses. This confirmed that the challenges faced by OFW nurses were substantial, consistently perceived, and significantly shape their pursuit of graduate studies.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study affirmed the deep commitment of OFW nurses to advance their education despite the weight of professional and personal challenges. To honor this commitment, the strategic plan includes actions to empower OFW nurses in Saudi Arabia to pursue and complete graduate studies by providing structured financial, academic, technological, workload, and wellness support, aligned with their unique challenges and aspirations. This will collectively affirm the value of OFW nurses and create a more compassionate pathway toward advanced education, which is crucial to the global healthcare system. Future scholars are encouraged to deepen this conversation by conducting longitudinal studies that follow nurses' academic journeys over time, or by exploring comparative research across host countries to understand how different environments shape feasibility. Qualitative inquiries may also reveal the lived stories, motivations, and struggles behind the statistics. Studies evaluating specific intervention programs and examining additional demographic variables can further guide institutions in designing humane, evidence-based support systems.

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## AI DECLARATION STATEMENT

AI tools were used solely for support in editorial refinement. All scholarly content, analyses, and conclusions were independently produced and verified by the authors.

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